



## Lamont-Bysiewicz Transition: Education Policy Addendum

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### Education Policy Committee

#### Addendum to [Final Education Policy Committee Memo](#)

*The following is an addendum that provides additional detail for each of the Education Policy Committee's proposed policy goals/actions (listed in the same order as the main document). The goals highlighted in yellow are believed to be achievable within the first 100 days.*

#### **Early Childhood Education/Care Access and Quality:**

- **Raise Care4Kid payment rates and expand access to allow parents to enroll in training:** Connecticut has one of the highest, if not the highest, rate of preschool attendance in the country. While more can and should be done to reach the remaining 20% of children who don't attend preschool, the more urgent problem is that there are only 27 licensed infant/toddler spaces for every 100 children under age three. This shortage of licensed childcare prevents parents from working, which contributes to disproportionately high rates of child poverty among children ages birth to three. The new administration should prioritize expanding access to affordable, quality child care, particularly infant/toddler care, through the Care4Kids program. Eligibility for Care4Kids should also be expanded as part of a broader Two-Generation strategy to address poverty, so that parents have access to child care while they are in school or a training program, as well as when they are working. The new administration can increase supply and bring more providers into the market by approving the Office of Early Childhood's pending proposal to increase payment rates for infant and toddler care under the Care4Kids program. Legislative approval will be required to expand eligibility for Care4Kids to parents who are enrolled in school (see [sample "State-Approved Activities" language from Georgia](#) under section 6.8). A \$25 million state investment could leverage an additional \$5 to \$15 million in Federal SNAP Education and Training funds.
- **Set aggressive timeline for launch of [Quality Rating and Improvement System \(QRIS\)](#):** There is a need to appropriately assess the quality of every early child care/education program that receives public funding. The QRIS provides a universal standard for evaluation of programs statewide.  
  
A full-time position to support QRIS was hired in 2014, and a pilot was implemented in 2017-18. The timeline for full implementation has been extended into the future (a full launch could be as late as 2025). The committee feels strongly that implementation of this system should be made a priority. This would require setting a more aggressive timeline for full launch of QRIS.
- **Conduct an audit on early childhood care access and current level of unmet demand:** A major concern of the committee is that there is a need to better understand access challenges for the existing early child care/education program slots. For example, although there may be

School Readiness slots available within a district, the families most in need may not be able to access these slots because of transportation challenges or related issues. There is a general belief that additional preschool slots should be made available. However, an audit would serve to determine the current unmet demand for care so that a more formal, data-informed recommendation can be made on the number of slots needed.

### **Achievement/Opportunity Gap:**

- **Reexamine purpose/role of CSDE/SBE and relationship with RESCs and other partners:**

The overarching structure of the state's education support system, including the role and purpose of the the CT State Department of Education, the State Board of Education, the RESC Alliance, and other educational organizations, needs to be reexamined. Within the first 100 days, the administration should announce a new vision for how these organizations will collaboratively serve the needs of the state through a coordinated approach. A coordinated system would define the roles of each of these organizations in service of districts, schools, and students effectively and efficiency with limited resources. The system would maximize the use of available capacity in each of these organizations for key functions, including professional development, data analysis, auditing, and compliance in order to reduce redundancies and improve the consistency and quality of services and support statewide.

The state education support system should also explore building its capacity to identify, evaluate, disseminate, and support the implementation of evidence-based national and local interventions related to the areas of trauma-informed practice, social/emotional learning restorative justice in schools, expanded school counselor/social worker supports, effective wraparound service models, embedded STEM programming, science enrichment curricula, math remediation, and arts integration.

- **Launch development of statewide curricula, inclusive of the technical school system:** Too many districts are developing curricula independently or are purchasing off-the-shelf products that do not meet an appropriate level of rigor. There should be an effort to develop a statewide curriculum, aligned to all relevant content standards, in order to remove inefficiencies (e.g. curriculum writing time spent at the local level) and to ensure that the curricula being implemented meets high standards. Connecticut should look to MA as an example of establishing a model curricula for all school districts to adopt/build upon. CREC recently modeled a collaborative process to develop and distribute shared curriculum for the [Next Generation Science Standards](#). This effort should include customized curriculum development as it pertains to the [technical education and career system schools](#).

- **Develop a statewide STEM education action plan that consolidates previous reports:**

There have been a number of efforts to study and address needs related to enhancing and promoting STEM education within our state. There is now a need to synthesize and prioritize these studies in order to develop a more explicit action plan that can move STEM education forward as a key strategy in strengthening our academic and professional STEM systems. Such an effort could also highlight the STEM/STEAM efforts already happening in Connecticut schools. Strong models already exists in vocational-technical high schools, agricultural-technical school programs, and STEM-themed magnet schools, in addition to efforts in public schools across the state. Highlighting these efforts can help explain their value to public and private industry. CT should look to the [RI STEAM Center](#) as an example of a program focused on increasing interest in and advancement of STEM within the state.

- Create a Math Leadership Institute for school principals:** [Math results for CT students continue to lag](#). The latest statewide assessment (SBAC) indicates that only 43% of grade eight students statewide met standard and only 17-19% of Black and Hispanic students met the state standard. CT is in middle of the pack compared with other states and significantly behind our peer states (see [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) results). Math remediation rates are also very high for students who go on to college, taking time and money away from students pursuing their career interests. There is a need to increase professional development supports to ensure that all districts, especially those making fewer gains in math, are effectively delivering math instruction and assessment. School leaders play a critical role in this effort, and they often have had less direct exposure to the math content area. A Math Leadership Institute for school principals could be modeled after the [Literacy Leadership Institute](#) currently being run as a partnership between CCER, the CSDE, and CAS. It is also worth looking into a potential partnership with national supports such as [Math for America](#).
- Require that computer science be taught in every high school.** There is great momentum underway for implementing computer science across all state high schools. [An action plan](#), modeled after the Rhode Island plan, has been provided by Norman Sondheimer from the CS4CT Initiative.
- Improve state's longitudinal data system to be more timely and user-friendly:** The current [EdSight system](#) provides data on the K-12 system. While this information can be useful, the data is oftentimes outdated or difficult to access or interpret. For instance, the current public data available for School Performance and Profile reports is only as recent as 2016-17. The system can be challenging to navigate, and there are limits on filter functionality in order to review patterns of performance across groups of schools/districts (e.g. all Commissioner's Network Schools).
- Demand greater transparency and accountability for Alliance Districts, Commissioner's Network, charter and magnet school progress/results; codify best practices.** The committee recommends examining the intended and actual outcomes of the Alliance District and Commissioner's Network funding programs, including whether these investments are designed and implemented in a manner that results in long-term, systemic outcomes. The definition of an Alliance District needs to be revisited. The number of Alliance Districts has become too large to sufficiently manage the program in a way that drives sustainability and results for students. With an effort to fully fund ECS, the state should consider reducing the number of Alliance Districts from the current number of 30+ to between 10 and 12, not withdrawing funding from any of the districts. This will allow for more targeted approaches to intervention and more robust outcome and accountability data. The current funding processes focus more heavily on the approval of use of funds, rather than the auditing of use of funds. Have these programs achieved the results they were designed to achieve? Are the programs sustainable? More robust measures need to be in place to evaluate program outcomes and then codify best practices for the benefit of districts and schools statewide.
- Launch CT's "Teach.org" public relations campaign for the teaching profession:** Connecticut has developed a [Connecticut.teach.org](#) public relations campaign, which is a comprehensive approach to attracting diverse and talented people, both locally and nationally, to the teaching profession in our state. By partnering with [TEACH.org](#), which is a national organization, Connecticut was able to create a dedicated website ([connecticut.teach.org](#)), a broad social media campaign, and a series of in-person events, including the creation of a teacher ambassador program. The program is currently funded by a grant from the [Peter and](#)

[Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation](#), which covers the cost of the platform and a dedicated CT-based project director. While a [press statement](#) was made in October 2018, there is not widespread awareness of this effort.

- **Propose changes to out-of-state reciprocity for educator certification:** It is important to review current regulations that create barriers to minority recruitment efforts for out-of-state teachers. While some progress was made during the 2018 legislative session ([C.G.S. 18-34](#)), we must further eliminate and streamline reciprocity. There is an Interstate Agreement that facilitates reciprocity, however, there is a need to push this further. A larger, longer-term project is to reconsider the [regulations for educator certification](#). These regulations were last updated in 1998 and are outdated and misaligned with the content standards and various roles/responsibilities in our school systems.
- **Expand educator preparation pathways and leadership development programs:** In order to address the ongoing issue of teacher shortage areas (e.g. math, science, special education, bilingual) and challenges with recruitment of a diverse educator workforce, the committee recommends the expanding the alternative-route-to-certification (ARC) programs such as [Relay ARC program](#). This program places an emphasis on recruiting career changers and non-certified staff members who are already working within a school district (e.g. paraeducators and clerical staff).
- **Shift oversight of Minority Teacher Incentive Program from OHE to the CSDE:** Under the current [State Board of Education five-year strategic plan](#), there is a committed focus of the CSDE on diversification of the educator workforce. Currently, [the percentage of educators of color is far from mirroring the percentage of students of color](#) within the public school system. The Minority Teacher Incentive Program was created to recruit candidates of color into the teaching profession. While it lives within the OHE, there is a lack of coherence/alignment with the efforts underway at the CSDE. As well, OHE does very little to promote the program or follow up with candidates. The role of OHE in this work is currently defined in statute, [C.G.S. 10a-168a](#), so this would require a statutory amendment.

#### **Affordable Higher Education and Career Pathways:**

- **Establish a Governor's Industry, Higher Education, & Career Pathways Council:**

The Advisory Board would be comprised of senior representatives from the private sector; PK-12 schools/districts; post-secondary educational institutions; nonprofits; and labor. There would be a number of subcommittees, including but not limited to: Financial Services/Insurance, Healthcare, Technology, and Educational Models/Non-profit Partnerships. Industry-specific subcommittees would have representatives of relevant employers.

  - Goals of the Board would be to:
    - Identify the common workforce needs and skills gaps of current employees in order to address underemployment and educational/training opportunities;
    - Develop continuous, sustainable pipelines for the workforce; and
    - Conduct a comparative analysis of best practices within CT and in other states (SC, CO, TN, MD) and make this information publicly available through a centralized website.
  - Outcomes of the Board would be to:
    - Develop curricula to integrate and make available, for credit, work-based coursework, including, but not limited to: apprenticeships; coding academies and training bootcamps; dual-enrollment; credentials/associate's degree;

- Build partnerships with community colleges and four-year colleges to expand and adjust relevant offerings based on need/demand;
- Study and identify existing high school/post-secondary models that are most effective in order to scale them; and
- Coordinate and align funding opportunities.

We may also want to consider the [Maine Spark](#) coalition model, which received buy-in from a wide range of stakeholders in order to advance career readiness at a statewide level.

- **Create FAFSA data MOU between OHE and CSDE; long-term merge of OHE with CSDE:** The committee felt that FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) completion should be prioritized as a strategy for achieving more affordable higher education. FAFSA completion is a cornerstone of moving toward free college for students within the state, which would allow CT to keep pace and compete with states such as NY ([now providing free college to the middle class](#)) and NJ ([currently moving toward free community college](#)). CT's [FAFSA completion rate](#), while dynamic, fluctuates between is about 36% and 47% for students. By regulation, the federal government sends FAFSA information only to the State Office of Higher Education (OHE); however, this data cannot be linked to students since the student data systems are maintained by the CSDE. Therefore, a first step in increasing completion rates is for the CSDE to have direct access to this data by way of an MOU between OHE and the CSDE. The CSDE can then work directly with school districts to increase FAFSA awareness and completion rates. With an MOU in place, a campaign comprised of the following steps should be implemented:
  - Announce a goal of increasing FAFSA completion rate to 50% within the next academic year.
  - Provide direct technical assistance support focused on FAFSA completion by way of workshops with students and families.
  - As part of this campaign, the CSDE and districts should leverage the [National College Access Network](#), which exists to promote FAFSA completion.
  - Gradually move towards requiring FAFSA completion as part of high school graduation requirements.

Related to this recommendation, the committee propose that there be further consideration given to merging OHE into the CSDE in order to streamline efforts and provide further efficiencies.

- **Launch a low-cost loan and scholarship program through CHESLA with focus on STEM:** CHESLA (Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority) is targeting STEM, engaging employers, and increasing awareness of loans and other programs for certificate programs offered by accredited schools. CHESLA will also target applicants for STEM-related jobs, and enhance opportunities for new entrants to the workforce that will address diverse workforce needs. CHESLA's work to further workforce initiatives through participation in various national organizations such as the Strada Education Network focused on new pathways between education and employment.
- **Target external funding sources to develop career pathways and training programs:** Target philanthropic/corporate foundations that have worked successfully with other states to develop career pathways and training programs (e.g. [Lumina Foundation](#), [Nellie Mae Foundation](#), [Year Up](#), Jewish Vocational Services, the [Dalio Foundation](#), [Federal Apprenticeship Grant Program](#), Perkins Funds, and [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#)). This should be

done in coordination with the aforementioned Career Pathways Advisory Board.

- **Implement a marketing plan for the CT higher education system:** We know that a strong economy is predicated on access to education and training opportunities. Our community colleges serve as a pathway to advanced educational opportunities as well as good paying jobs in industries that require advanced skills and training. CT is currently the 4th largest exporter of college-going students. To address this head on, an aggressive marketing campaign should be developed promoting CT's higher education system while setting strategic goals promoting access and statewide degree and certificate completion.

### **School Funding and Regionalization:**

- **Commit to funding ECS at the [statutory level](#) for the biennium:** Appropriate funding of the state's education system is essential to our state's long-term economic success. For too long, the state's primary grant to municipalities for education has been underfunded. Statutorily, full funding of ECS would be phased-in over 10 years. FY19 is year 1. In the biennium budget, the commitment needs to be adherence to the statute for FY 20 & 21 and providing the funding appropriation to do so. This will send an important message to our state that education is a priority and an essential pillar of the state's economic health and future.
- **Implement a new, comprehensive school funding formula:** The means by which the state distributes education funds to municipalities and choice schools has been political for too long. The state must see the appropriate distribution of these funds as a moral imperative and a strategic means of ensuring that all students will receive a high-quality education and will have the opportunity to contribute positively to our state's economy. To achieve this outcome, the state's funding formula(s) must be fairer, simpler, more predictable, and more efficient. Connecticut's legislature has established more than [10 different funding formulas](#) to determine how much money public schools should receive. These funding formulas must be updated and aligned, using a single funding system with consistent criteria for districts and choice schools. To begin this process, the state must determine the true foundational cost of educating a child in Connecticut. In order to implement a systematic and logical approach to school funding, this base must be updated to reflect the true cost of educating a child, not the cost that CT can currently afford. Extensive work has been done in this area and a comprehensive proposal is presently being developed by the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS). We have provided an [annotated appendix](#) of many existing, relevant resources related to school funding.
- **Create a dedicated state office in OPM focused on securing grant dollars:** Accessing federal dollars should be a priority and explicit expectation for the State Department of Education. A first step toward accessing these potential resources is to systematically study where CT is lagging in terms of taking advantage of federal and grant funds. Absent funds to create a dedicated state office in OPM or hire dedicated grant writers at SDE, the department should have access to and support from the extensive grant writing resources and capacity available at the state's institutions of higher education. Further, as a longer-term goal, capacity for grant writing should be built within local school districts to enable them to access additional resources for education.
- **Promote shared services models for school districts:** Extensive work on opportunities for shared services has been completed by past committees and organizations. We have provided an [annotated appendix](#) of many existing, relevant resources related to regionalization. The first

step is to assign a team to: review the extensive, existing studies and recommendations related to regionalization; develop a comprehensive plan for reducing costs and improving service to children through regionalization; and execute the plan. In particular, there is opportunity for regionalized services for students with special educational needs. Special education typically cost about 25-30% of a district's overall budget. If we don't begin to contain special education costs, those costs will take over a larger and larger percentage of every district's budget. There are successful examples of regional programs that serve students with special educational needs. These collaboratives have the potential as regional solutions to reduce the cost of special education delivery and increase the quality of the services provided. In many cases, the barrier to these programs getting off the ground is the initial start-up cost, such as the cost of renovating a space for this purpose. Although these costs are proportionally small and are quickly recovered through the program savings, they are a barrier to programs getting started. Low- or no-interest loans should be offered to local school districts to support the site development costs of starting up collaborative special education programs. This proposal can be near to cost neutral depending on implementation specifics. Loan funds could be allocated through bonding or funded through private partnerships. These collaborative special education programs should be flexible and designed to meet the needs of the participating districts. Lessons learned from successful, existing programs suggest that these collaboratives must be well designed; have a clear mission and population; and the budget and tuition should be determined by the participating districts. These programs could potentially be managed by an outside provider if the school districts don't have the capacity or desire to manage the program.

- **Establish a minimum school district size to be implemented over time:** Across the state, the tax base is shrinking and service demands are growing. With more scarce resources and pressure for economies of scale, sustaining the small town governance model is increasingly difficult. The goal is to maintain strong communities and excellent schools, while fostering cooperation across municipalities. To date, simply encouraging these collaborations has not been successful. The committee does not recommend that the state require consolidation, but that it no longer subsidize small school districts with state education funds. The committee recommends that towns that do not meet minimum size requirements be given two years to develop and implement a plan for consolidation. If they do not, the state should gradually withdraw state funding (e.g. reduced by 25% per year).
- **Require small school districts to internally consolidate or regionally share services:** The state should not continue to subsidize small school districts with significant administrative overhead. Currently in Connecticut, there are 28 school districts with a single school but both a principal and a superintendent. These school districts should be expected to consolidate roles internally (such as a superintendent serving in the role of principal) or regionally share district administrators. These consolidations should include, but not be limited to, principals and superintendents. If they choose not to do so, the state should gradually withdraw state funding (e.g. reduced by 25% per year).
- **Move to a single, statewide, collaborative contract for an electronic IEP system:** The state has a common IEP form, which is currently being redesigned. However, districts are contracting separately for electronic management of those forms. Currently, most districts are independently contracting with the same provider: IEP Direct. The state should start by distributing an RFP for a single, statewide, collaborative contract. Districts should be willing to contribute to the cost of this contract, because they are currently paying for the online system and the shared cost would be less than the individual cost. In addition, there is current legislation that requires all districts bill Medicaid (with some exceptions). Having a single

electronic IEP system will help with the capitalization of the Medicaid system, because then the state could have a single vendor for Medicaid billing as well. A single online IEP system would also make it significantly easier for the state to audit data related to special education.

- **Reduce statutory red tape, redundancies, and barriers to educational improvement:** A general concern of the committee was that there are an overwhelming number of statutes related to education that burden districts unnecessarily. Some of these statutes even limit expansion of regionalization. The education statutes need to be audited/inventoried, and recommendations made to streamline and/or eliminate barriers and redundancies. New statutes related to education should be carefully vetted for their impact on local school districts, including an extensive and transparent cost/benefit analysis prior to adoption.